

Baladevi Chandrasekar's performance at Sangam Festival in Princeton, NJ
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Baladevi Chandrasekar's dance presentation on the 14th June at the Sangam Festival in Princeton, NJ, was a sincere attempt to reach out the treasured art of Bharatanatyam to the audience without compromising or diluting the same.

All the items were tastefully presented with an eye on aesthetics and maintaining the undercurrent of divinity.



Among the items the one that was special was the Suddha Nrityam where the dancer dances to intricate and complicated beats of the mridangam without the accompaniment of music. That evening, the mridangam was played brilliantly by Tiruvarur Vaidyanathan. All the different nadais (five in toto) were presented by the mridangam artiste. The solfa syllables were recited and played and they were replicated with percentage perfection by the dancer through her immaculate footwork.

In usual practice when different gaits are used, the tempo of the pulses remain constant and the tala (measuring scale) is stretched or contracted. But in this instance, interestingly the tempo of the tala was kept constant and as a result the pulses accelerated or decelerated as per the choice of the nadai. This made the task of dancing to it all the more challenging and it is to Baladevi's credit that the number was executed with effortless ease and aplomb.

More than anything else, the whole exercise, rarely seen in Bharatanatyam performances these days, reached out to the audience, who responded with a thunderous ovation. The real test of any innovation is when the target audience is able to follow it and appreciate it. This was achieved in full measure at the dance performance.